

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated July 1, 2006. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

As outlined above, claims 9, 14, 15, 18 and 21-27 stand for consideration in this application, wherein claims 1-8, 10-13, 16-17 and 19-20 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, while claims 9, 14, 15 and 18 are being amended to correct formal errors and to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject invention. In addition, new claims 21-27 are hereby submitted for consideration.

All amendments to the application are fully supported therein. Applicants hereby submit that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

Prior Art Rejections

The First 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over MacNally (U.S. 6,516,185 B1) in view of Herdey (U.S. 2003/0098734). Claims 5-8 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over MacNally in view of Herdey as applied to claim 1, and further in view of the prior art as admitted by Applicants in Fig. 5 of the present application.

As mentioned above, claims 1-8 and 13 are being canceled, and therefore, these rejections are moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for holding that claims 9-12 and 14-20 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 9, 14, 15 and 18 are being amended in independent form so as to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, claims 9, 14, 15 and 18 and their dependent claims 21-27 would be allowable.

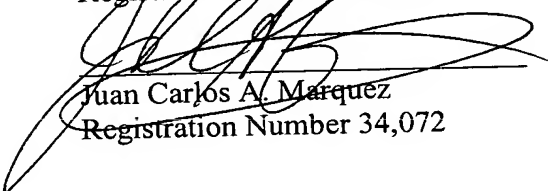
Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action. However, Applicants will point out that the reasons for allowability of the above referenced claims are not limited to the reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action.

Conclusion

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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